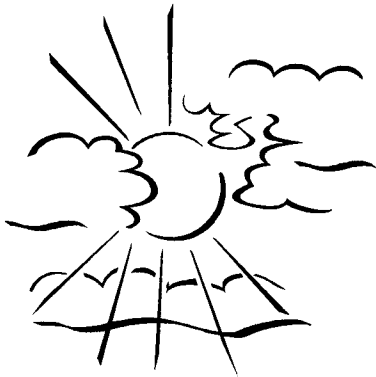


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*Important story at this spot

Articles in Today's Clips

Friday, January 27, 2006

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

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The Detroit News Editorial
January 27, 2006

In Granholm's Michigan, a chicken for every pot

Governor offers her version of utopian state

It has taken three years, but Gov. Jennifer Granholm has at last defined herself politically. She came to office claiming to be a New Democrat centrist, pro-business and pro-growth. But there's nothing new about this Democrat.

Granholm is an old-school liberal, devoted to the discredited programs of the New Deal and Great Society and enamored of central planning. She sees a big government solution to every problem.

"We will protect you and your family and your economic security," she whispered in her endearing fashion, forgetful that no government of a free people has ever been able to do that. Clearly, Granholm was using her fourth State of the State address to lay out her strategy for re-election. She will run as a chicken-in-every-pot populist, demonizing big business and promising to turn Michigan into a caretaker state where a benevolent government involves itself in every aspect of a citizen's life.

To that purpose, Wednesday's speech was a dandy.

It was almost as if Granholm, bound for three years by the pretense of moderation, could barely contain herself.

Freed of her centrist bonds, she rattled off a breathtaking far left agenda that should have had taxpayers gripping tight to their wallets and businesses contemplating an investment here fleeing for the hills.

Something for everyone

Higher wages, government-paid health insurance, jobs on the public dole and, for good measure, a spanking of the evil, price-gouging oil companies. Goodness, she was on a rip-roaring roll.

Absent from the stem winder were the answers to the questions of: Who will pay for all this?

And why would a business bring jobs to a state whose governor is so Carteresque in her economic naivete?

We'll explore those answers in coming days, as we give closer attention to the individual proposals presented by the governor. For now, we'll say there isn't much we like.

We've already applauded Granholm for her merit scholarship plan, which will provide qualifying students with up to \$4,000 to offset this state's skyrocketing tuition costs. It's a good idea, and she gets credit for making it more palatable.

But we've been waiting for the governor to get behind a top-to-bottom remake of the state's inadequate education system.

She again failed to do that, opting instead to voice her obligatory unwavering support of public schools.

Where are all those jobs?

Granholm had the cheek to boast of her job retention and creation prowess, but neglected to mention that she is the only governor in America who has failed to increase private employment during the last three years.

Her much ballyhooed "jobs today, jobs tomorrow" plan rests almost entirely on using taxpayer money to create public works jobs. It also moves the state into the dicey venture capital business,

placing millions of taxpayer dollars at risk. It creates a crazy quilt tax policy that rewards some businesses and punishes others, without much rhyme or reason.

She continues to deny the connection between high taxes and slow economic growth, though nearly every job she has coaxed to Michigan has come with sizeable tax incentives.

While expressing oneness with small business owners, she vowed to drive many of those employers into bankruptcy by raising the minimum wage.

Cheers don't mask problems

Engorged with populism, Granholm once again waved her finger in the face of Big Oil, demanding a cap on its windfall profits, forgetting that when Jimmy Carter tried that very same thing, oil production dropped sharply and prices soared. Conveniently, she didn't offer to rebate the windfall Michigan received in the form of higher gasoline sales taxes.

She saved a little indignation for that other bogeyman of anti-profiteers, the insurance companies. Granholm insists they cut their rates by 20 percent, and don't bother her with the details that Michigan mandates more comprehensive coverage from those companies than almost any other state.

For added flourish, she promised to inch the state toward universal, state-paid health insurance, proposing a program that has failed wherever it's been tried.

And she vowed to co-opt private investment houses by offering a state-operated 401(k) retirement plan for those who can't find their way to the neighborhood TD Waterhouse or Charles Schwab office.

We share the governor's desire to see a Michigan where everyone has health insurance, a retirement plan and the means to support themselves and their families. But only private employers can create that state.

Granholm makes a better cheerleader than she does a quarterback. She held us spellbound Wednesday, but she didn't give us a viable blueprint for bringing jobs to Michigan.

We still await that plan. But we don't expect it to come from this governor.

For a related commentary, see the below:

Granholm's agenda

Among the proposals Gov. Jennifer Granholm made Wednesday were:

The creation of the Michigan First Health Care program to provide "quality, affordable health care" for 550,000 people through a private insurance company with additional revenues coming from the federal government.

A state-designed and operated 401(k) retirement savings program for workers whose firms do not provide them.

A health care information program that would simplify the collection and distribution of patient health care information.

A 20 percent rollback of insurance rates in Michigan.

A cap on oil companies' "windfall" profits.

Source: State of the State, 2006

Friday, January 27, 2006

Frank Beckmann

Granholt proposes brave new world of big government

Gov. Jennifer Granholt laid out a promise for everyone in her first unofficial re-election speech that was disguised this week as the State of the State message.

The bubbly governor recommended a series of programs to make state government the master of our lives, providing assurances -- or intrusions -- that would have made Aldous Huxley proud to claim Michigan's brave new world as his own.

Whether by design or because of perceived political necessity, Granholt has shed her cloak of self-described centrist politics and has clearly bared herself as a big government spender. Such a well-meaning approach might be defensible if our state were as flush as she envisions it will be in five years.

"You're going to be blown away by the strength and diversity of Michigan's transformed economy," she said. But the governor offered no evidence or reason for such optimism, except that the state will look after us.

For those who don't do well in school, don't worry. Granholt wants to create a state job for them -- or at the least increase the minimum wage; provide a giant new government-run health care program and create a 401(k) plan to compete with private business.

The governor wants to "significantly" increase the size of our preschool program for 4-year-olds, legislate against schoolyard bullying and provide \$4,000 college scholarships.

If you still haven't found an entitlement you like, there's her call for a 20 percent across-the-board cut in insurance rates -- why stop there? Let's make it 50 percent -- or the call for a national cap on undefined "exorbitant" oil company profits. But she didn't suggest government halt collecting state taxes at the gas pump, apparently because government tax collection can never be exorbitant.

This effort to insert government into almost every phase of our lives overshadows her sound efforts to toughen curriculum requirements for graduation from Michigan high schools, encourage regional cooperation on major infrastructure projects (like a new or improved Cobo Center) and ensure that National Guard troops returning from Iraq can reclaim their old jobs. House Speaker Craig DeRoche said businesses haven't complained about their inability to apply for licenses online (another Granholt initiative), but he has heard a litany of complaints over Michigan's Single Business Tax structure, which the governor oddly didn't address.

Instead, we are left to wonder what executives are thinking as they digest her message, which complained about the success of insurance and oil companies and ignored the warnings of small business owners about the job-killing damage of a minimum wage increase. This more-government, less-capitalism approach would be truly unique among the 50 states if it ever proves successful.

But corporations don't vote -- people do. And candidate Granholt was clearly aiming her message at all who might reward her largesse with their votes.

While Granholm did little to clear the murky view of Michigan's economic future, she did make transparent what another four years will mean. Be forewarned; an entitlement program here, an entitlement program there, and pretty soon you're talking about spending real taxpayer money.

Frank Beckmann is host of "The Frank Beckmann Show" on WJR (760 AM) from 9-11:30 a.m. Monday-Friday. Please e-mail letters to letters@detnews.com.

Helping the Uninsured in Michigan - What Will Work

Carrie Manders

Created: 1/26/2006 4:56:38 PM

Updated: 1/26/2006 11:15:17 PM

Last night's state of the state address focused mainly on Michigan's economy and jobs.

Governor Jennifer Granholm also spoke about a major change to the state's health care system. But her officials have few details on how it would work.

WZZM 13 News has launched a year-long critical look into the state of Michigan.

The governor says the average citizen pays an extra \$730 a year in insurance to cover those don't have it. She says she has a solution, but not everyone agrees it's right.

"We will provide access to quality, affordable health care for 550,000 people," says Granholm at Wednesday night's State of the State address.

A rousing applause from the democrats for a new insurance product the governor calls Michigan First.

"The concept is simple. Give families who to otherwise could not afford health insurance access to basic, low-cost health care plan through a private insurance company," says Granholm.

Granholm says this program will cut Michigan's one million uninsured in half. And it will be funded with help from the federal government.

We asked the state how this would work and how much money it would cost the people who enroll. We were told the details haven't been worked out.

That's what worries Republican Gubernatorial candidate Dick DeVos.

"Consistent with past practice, the governor will talk about an idea but it will be months before we find out the details," says DeVos.

So we asked Granholm's opponent how he would address the state's uninsured.

"The first thing that we need in Michigan is jobs. That's why I'm running is to create jobs in this state. Create an environment where we can get more people back to work," says DeVos.

No specifics, he says those will come at the appropriate time when people are paying attention in this state.

Some private health plans already offer insurance to those who don't have it. In fact, Grand Valley Health Plan here in Grand Rapids announced its new "PrimeCare" product today.

Published January 27, 2006

Ricky's mom charged with domestic assault Parents of missing boy confirmed as suspects in July disappearance

By Kevin Grasha
Lansing State Journal

MASON - Lisa Holland, the mother of missing Williamston child Ricky Holland, pleaded not guilty Thursday to a felony charge of assault with a dangerous weapon and a misdemeanor charge of domestic violence - both against her husband.

Also on Thursday, police - for the first time - confirmed that both Lisa Holland and her husband, Tim Holland, are suspects in Ricky's disappearance.

"I can't discuss why we're willing to take the next step," Ingham County Detective Sgt. Roy Holliday said.

Holliday said, however, that Thursday's charges against Lisa Holland are not related to the disappearance of Ricky, who was 7 years old when he went missing in July 2005. The case sparked a massive search that yielded few clues over the next several months.

Lisa Holland's attorney, Andrew Abood, said Thursday that she is asserting her innocence in regard to Ricky's disappearance.

"She loves Ricky Holland," Abood said, adding: "Any additional evidence police may have gotten from Tim Holland is tainted because of bias against her."

Tim Holland's attorney, Dennis Hurst - who was retained Thursday - plans to release a statement today.

Lisa Holland, wearing a Michigan State University sweat shirt, appeared via a video arraignment before Ingham County District Court Magistrate Rod Dropping.

She was arrested Wednesday night in Williamston after Tim Holland filed a complaint against her, Sheriff Gene Wriggelsworth said.

Sometime between November and January, Lisa Holland tried to throw an electric hair-dryer into the shower while her husband was in there, according to a complaint read aloud Thursday by Dropping. The domestic violence charge stems from an incident earlier this week.

Holland pleaded not guilty to the charges. The maximum penalty for the assault charge is four years in prison. She posted bond - set at \$5,000 for the felony and \$200 for the misdemeanor - late Thursday and was released, according to jail officials.

As part of her bond, Holland cannot have contact with her husband, although she can see her children, who are with their father.

Jane Gauss, Lisa Holland's sister, attended the video arraignment with her husband. When Lisa Holland was allowed to see them on her video monitor, she began crying.

"It's just a nightmare continuing," Gauss said after the hearing.

Staff writer T.M. Shultz contributed to this report. Contact Kevin Grasha at 267-1347 or kgrasha@lsj.com.

Timeline of Ricky's disappearance

- July 1: Ricky is last reported seen at bedtime at his Williamston home.
- July 2: Ricky is reported missing to authorities.
- July 3: A nationwide Amber Alert is issued. A command center is set up.
- July 4: 600 volunteers spend the holiday searching for the child.
- July 5: Ground teams, four-wheelers, ultralight aircraft, dive teams, Civil Air Patrol planes and K-9 units keep searching for the 7-year-old.
- July 6: A fruit snack wrapper and a tip from a fast-food employee in Perry yield no clues.
- July 7: A partial footprint and two possible sightings feed hope, then disappointment.
- July 8: A boy who looks like Ricky is seen at a Wal-Mart in Okemos, but it's not Ricky.
- July 9: Tim and Lisa Holland plead again for Ricky's safe return.
- July 10: Authorities end continuous ground searches.
- July 11: Investigators check out three possible sightings in cornfields near Williamston.
- July 12: Dive teams again search the Red Cedar River.
- July 13: The Deliver Me Home program mails 65,000 cards with Ricky's photo. A \$5,000 reward is donated.

- July 15: The search for Ricky turns up an adult corpse near Swartz Creek.
- July 16: "America's Most Wanted" airs a clip on Ricky.
- July 17: Investigators check out three tips after the national TV exposure.
- Aug. 1: A month passes since Ricky is last seen.
- Aug. 12: The Ingham County Sheriff's Office, with help from Michigan State University's anthropology department, digs up a dog's remains in the Holland's backyard.
- Aug. 15: The Sheriff's Office sends a letter to schools in Ingham County, Perry and Fowlerville asking officials to be on the lookout for anyone trying to enroll Ricky.
- Sept. 1: Two months pass since Ricky is last seen.
- Sept. 6: Ingham County sheriff's officials seize the Hollands' cars and home computer, and search their house.
- Oct. 4: Police take a bed comforter from the Holland house during the execution of another search warrant, the Hollands' attorney says.
- Oct. 14: Authorities take hair samples and fingerprints from Tim and Lisa Holland, their attorney says. It is the fourth time in about two months that Ingham County sheriff's officials serve the Hollands with search warrants. For the first time, police describe the Hollands as "persons of interest."
- Nov. 8: A five-hour search of Ella Sharp Park in Jackson by 40 law enforcement officers fails to turn up any clues in Ricky's disappearance. A helicopter and several tracking dogs were used to search the 550-acre park, which included large open sections and dense wooded areas.
- Thursday: Lisa Holland is arraigned on charges of assaulting her husband. She posts bond and faces four years in prison if convicted. Also, police for the first time classify both Lisa and Tim Holland as suspects in Ricky's disappearance.

Jan 27, 8:15 AM EST

Police suspect parents of boy missing since July

MASON, Mich. (AP) -- The parents of a Williamston boy who has been missing since July are suspects in his disappearance, authorities say.

Separately, the mother of Ricky Holland, who was 7 when he vanished July 2, has been charged with assaulting her husband.

Lisa Holland pleaded not guilty Thursday to a felony charge of assault with a dangerous weapon and a misdemeanor charge of domestic violence. She is accused of trying to throw a hair dryer in the shower while her husband, Tim Holland, was in there sometime between November and January, and of another incident this week.

Also on Thursday, police confirmed that both Lisa and Tim Holland are suspects in Ricky's disappearance.

Ingham County Detective Sgt. Roy Holliday told the Lansing State Journal that the charges against Lisa Holland are unrelated to Ricky's disappearance.

Lisa Holland's attorney, Andrew Abood, said Thursday that his client is innocent in the boy's disappearance.

"She loves Ricky Holland," Abood said, adding: "Any additional evidence police may have gotten from Tim Holland is tainted because of bias against her."

Tim Holland's attorney, Dennis Hurst, who was retained Thursday, was expected to release a statement Friday.

If convicted of the assault charge, Lisa Holland faces up to four years in prison. She posted bond late Thursday and was released, jail officials said.

"It's just a nightmare continuing," her sister, Jane Gauss, said after Thursday's arraignment.

Information from: Lansing State Journal, <http://www.lansingstatejournal.com>

Infant's death called a sex-assault slaying

By Lisa Medendorp
MUSKEGON CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

January 27, 2006

SHELBY -- A 5-month-old baby's death last month was due to an infection that resulted from being sexually abused, according to Shelby police, who have been investigating the case as a homicide.

Sebastian James Gonzalez, the son of Jaime Gonzalez and Samantha Trout, both 20, of 143 N. Michigan, Shelby, was pronounced dead Dec. 12 at Hackley Lakeshore Hospital.

Since then, repeated interviews and other information gathered during the continuing investigation have cleared the baby's parents as suspects, said Shelby Police Chief Bob Wilson. Investigators have a suspect, "and we have some positive results back from the crime lab that keep us on the direction we're going," Wilson said Thursday. "We're getting closer to an arrest." The apartment occupied by the couple is above the Brown Bear, a restaurant-bar in the town's business district and only a few blocks from the hospital. About 11:30 a.m. on Dec. 12, Jaime Gonzalez called 911, saying his son was unresponsive.

When the baby died, "we thought we might be looking at a SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) case," Wilson said. The cause of death "wasn't apparent to us at the scene."

An autopsy was required, and it was performed Dec. 13 at Muskegon's Hackley Hospital. Wilson said he then learned the baby died from septicemia, a massive infection that resulted from "penetrating blunt trauma" to the infant's rectal area.

"It was an infection caused by a tear, where fecal matter directly entered the bloodstream," Wilson said. The blunt trauma was caused by a sexual assault, and not an inanimate object, he added.

The infection that killed the baby "was of short duration and it was powerful," Wilson said. "It shut down his organs one at a time."

Wilson said the sex act "occurred probably a day or two prior to his death," and that it may not have been the only time the baby was sexually abused.

During the ensuing investigation, Wilson said police learned the baby had been "a little fussy" when his mother bathed him around 4 a.m. before she left for work. "The baby woke up hungry around 9 a.m.," Wilson said, and his father gave him a bottle and put him back down on a bed. Jaime Gonzalez then went to sleep, and when he awoke and checked the baby, "he wasn't breathing and was cold to the touch," Wilson said.

The staff at the hospital worked 45 minutes trying to revive the infant, the chief said.

Authorities also said the victim's older brother was examined and showed no signs of sexual abuse.

Not since 1980 has there been a case in Muskegon or Oceana County of an infant homicide involving sexual abuse.

Twenty-five years ago, the sexual mutilation death of 7-month-old Rebecca Lee Davis of Muskegon Township sparked outrage in the community. The baby's father, Herschel R. Davis, then 20, was convicted a year later of first-degree criminal sexual conduct and second-degree murder during a bench trial.

Davis, now 46, was sentenced to life in prison and today is an inmate at the Earnest C. Brooks Correctional Facility in Muskegon.

Medical experts testified that Rebecca Lee Davis' death was caused by an infection that was the result of "multiple sexual assaults." The infant suffered multiple cuts, bruises and abrasions on the external and internal genitalia caused by the assaults, according to the autopsy report.

Driver found drunk with kid to be arraigned

Friday, January 27, 2006

By Scott Hagen
shagen@citpat.com -- 768-4929

A Springport woman who was found passed out drunk with her 5-year-old son in their car is expected to be arraigned Thursday in Calhoun County.

The woman, 32, is expected to be charged with a felony count of operating while intoxicated with an occupant under 16, a misdemeanor charge of operating without a license and a misdemeanor charge of having an open container of alcohol in a vehicle, said Dan Buscher, the Calhoun County Chief Assistant Prosecutor.

Her name is not being released pending her arraignment.

A passing motorist spotted the woman's car Jan. 18 in a ditch on 27 Mile Road near L Drive North in Sheridan Township, about five miles from Springport, and alerted authorities.

The motorist saw the woman slumped over the steering wheel and a child wiping condensation away from the window.

Calhoun County Sheriff's deputies found the woman unconscious with an unfinished 40-ounce bottle of Bud Light between her legs.

Police estimated the woman had been in the ditch for at least a half an hour.

Neither the child nor the woman was injured.

The woman recorded a 0.24 blood-alcohol content, three times the legal limit.

Buscher said the woman has a previous conviction for an alcohol-related offense.

For the drunken-driving charge, the woman could face up to five years in prison.

Man charged with sex assault

Friday, January 27, 2006

The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND HAVEN -- A 42-year-old former Grand Haven Township man faces life in prison for three first-degree criminal sexual conduct charges involving a girl under the age of 13 three years ago. James Jay Sloan, now living in Fruitport, was arraigned in 58th District Court and was released on a \$5,000 personal recognizance bond. His preliminary examination is scheduled for Tuesday. He was ordered to have no contact with the victim or children younger than 18. According to the Michigan State Police Post, Sloan allegedly had sex at least three times with girl. Detective Sgt. Gary Miles said there is evidence the sexual assaults have continued since then.

Kentucky Man Accused as Cyber Predator

By Anu Prakash

Web produced by Christine Lasek

January 26, 2006

A college student from Kentucky is accused of molesting a 13-year-old girl from Warren. Police say he is a cyber predator, and he is now facing serious charges.

David Patrick Connor is the 21-year-old college student from Kentucky. Police say he drove to Michigan on more than one occasion to meet with a Warren 13-year-old girl.

He is accused to meeting her at different Warren locations, fondling and having sex with her.

Investigators say Connor had been talking with the teen online for 6 months, and had been driving to Michigan since December.

When the girl's father found out about the Connor, he figured out where the two would meet again, and used his car to box Connor in at a Warren parking lot. He then called Warren police.

Investigators say they searched Connor's car, they found letters which stated he had had sex with the 13-year-old girl.

Connor was arrested, and he has been charged with several felonies. Bond was set at \$25,000 cash.

Charges filed in Tecumseh sex case

Thursday, January 26, 2006 8:39 PM EST

A long investigation wraps up as authorities file 32 charges against a former track coach

accused of hosting sex and drinking parties for students.

By David Panian

Daily Telegram Staff Writer

ADRIAN - A former Tecumseh High School track coach faces 21 felony and 11 misdemeanor charges, the most serious of which could send him to prison for life.

Matthew James Peterson, 33, of Tecumseh is charged with single felony counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct during the commission of another felony, distributing or promoting sexually abusive activity, accosting a child for immoral purposes and possessing child sexually abusive material; 12 felony counts of distributing obscene matter to children; five felony counts of child sexually abusive activity; one misdemeanor count of allowing the consumption of drugs or alcohol at his residence; and 10 misdemeanor counts of furnishing alcohol to minors. The first-degree criminal sexual conduct charge carries a penalty of up to life in prison. He is accused of having sex with a 17-year-old girl in 2003.

Peterson was already being held in the Lenawee County Jail on charges that he beat and sexually assaulted his estranged wife in November and December. He also pleaded not guilty Friday to a contempt of court charge for contacting his wife with an e-mail message that contained a letter he wanted her to send, recanting the assault charges and accusing Tecumseh police and Lenawee County prosecutors of carrying out a vendetta against him.

Bonds on the 32 charges made Wednesday totaled \$215,500. He was already being held in lieu of \$2.2 million on the assault and contempt charges. Peterson was also ordered Wednesday not to have contact with any of the victims or defendants in cases related to the new charges, police said. He is also not to have visits from anyone but his attorney.

The charges are the result of an investigation started in March 2004 when Tecumseh school officials learned of allegations that Peterson was hosting parties at his home where alcohol was available to minors.

Tecumseh Police Chief Mack Haun said the scope of Deputy Chief John Clark's investigation into the alleged parties expanded the more he looked into them.

"There was some speculation of things early, but as (Clark) got into it, it certainly broadened out," Haun said.

Clark was assisted by Detective Sgt. John Figurski of the Michigan State Police post in Adrian and Deputy Jeff Gontarski of the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Department, Haun said.

Allegations of Internet fraud also have been made against Peterson.

"There's another investigation unrelated to the parties that's still ongoing," Haun said.

Clark was out of town and unavailable for comment.

Haun said the parties were attended by members of the Tecumseh High School varsity boys track team and other students. The victims named in the warrants were 15, 16 or 17 years old at the time of the incidents, which happened from May 2003 to August 2003, police said. Most happened at Peterson's residence, and one happened in Raisin Charter Township.

Peterson resigned as track coach at the beginning of the 2003-04 school year when administrators asked him about the allegations, district officials said in 2004. He was never a full-time employee.

At his arraignment Wednesday, Peterson told Lenawee County District Judge James E. Sheridan that he is unemployed.

Haun said the former students have been mostly cooperative with the investigation.

"We've been pleased with the response we've gotten from them," he said.

Several of then-high school students have been charged with sex- or drug-related offenses stemming from the parties. Cole Rance Corey, 20, of Tecumseh is scheduled for trial next month on charges that in 2002 he delivered the drug Ecstasy, committed first-degree criminal sexual conduct and distributed obscene material to minors.

Jack Guy DaSilva, 21, of Tecumseh was sentenced Monday to 25 days in jail, 120 hours of community service work and 18 months on probation after he pleaded guilty to a reduced charge of aggravated assault. He admitted to having sex in an outdoor hot tub with a teenage girl who was intoxicated from drinking at the June 2003 party. Charges of first- and third-degree criminal sexual conduct were dismissed.

While sentencing DaSilva, Sheridan noted that DaSilva and other teenagers were drinking alcohol and watching a video of an underage girl having sex.

Matthew Norman Dunn, 20, of Tecumseh is scheduled for sentencing next month to a reduced aggravated assault charge. He was originally charged with three counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct and single counts of child sexually abusive activity and distributing child sexually abusive material. He was accused of making a tape of a 16-year-old girl having sex with him in April 2003 and playing it at a party at Peterson's house in June 2003.

Lindsay Ann Glenn, 20, of Tecumseh was sentenced in December to five days in jail and 15 days at the Lenawee Development Corp. residential center after pleading guilty to a reduced charge of use of Ecstasy. She originally was charged with delivery of methamphetamine and Ecstasy in 2002.

Tomas Anthony Sandoval, 21, of Tecumseh is awaiting sentencing to a reduced felonious assault charge from the same incident as DaSilva.

Judge increases molester's sentence

BURLINGTON, Vt. — A judge vilified as soft on crime by bloggers, TV commentators and politicians for giving a child molester just 60 days in jail increased the sentence Thursday to three to 10 years behind bars. Vermont District Judge Edward Cashman said he decided to impose the longer sentence because state officials reversed course and agreed to provide sex-offender treatment to 34-year-old Mark Hulett in prison. In his latest order, the judge remained firm in his belief that sentences must be concerned with more than just punishment.

Adult charges criticized

Friday, January 27, 2006

SCOTT DAVIS
THE SAGINAW NEWS

A Saginaw High School parent leader hopes a mistrial in a school shooting case will pave the way for prosecutors to retry the 16-year-old student as a juvenile rather than an adult.

Daveda Quinn-Shelton, president of the Parent-Teacher-Student Association, said she doesn't want to minimize the crime -- shooting a classmate in the chest during school Oct. 20 -- but believes that charging suspect Clarence W. Russell III as an adult is overly harsh.

Thursday, Saginaw County Circuit Judge William A. Crane declared a mistrial in the attempted murder case against the Saginaw youth, citing newly discovered evidence.

Authorities were trying Russell as an adult; he faced up to life imprisonment if convicted.

"I do think he needs to be punished," Quinn-Shelton said. "He committed a crime. He had a weapon. Don't lock him up forever and throw away the key."

She said she hopes prosecutors will reconsider the adult charges and recharge him as a juvenile in Circuit Court's Family Division.

Under the juvenile system, authorities cannot incarcerate a convicted youth beyond age 21.

Prosecutor Michael D. Thomas said he does not regret charging Russell as an adult last fall, noting the shooting endangered innocent bystanders on the Saginaw High campus.

"It's a hard and sad decision that a kid would feel the need to carry a gun in the school and need to use the gun in a school," he said.

Thomas said he has not yet decided whether to retry Russell as an adult -- or retry him at all.

Thomas said he must consult with assistant prosecutors and review the new evidence, supposedly another school surveillance tape.

Thomas noted that Russell would never serve life in prison even if he is convicted as an adult.

He said judges generally must follow state guidelines in sentencing, which for a first-time offender like Russell would mean far less than a life term.

Authorities accused Russell of shooting 16-year-old Daniel Foster during a break between classes.

The News contacted Foster's mother, Yolanda Chism, but she declined to comment on the mistrial or the prospect of retrying Russell.

The News also tried to interview Russell's classmates Thursday at the school, but security staff prohibited a reporter from speaking to students.

Michael B. Manley, spokesman for the Saginaw School District, said school officials are concerned that comments by students may spur a retaliatory attack and put teens in harm's way.

Quinn-Shelton said she also fears for the safety of her own 14-year-old son at the school but doesn't believe that throwing children into prison is the way to deal with escalating violence.

In the Oct. 20 incident, she noted Russell claimed he shot Foster in self-defense only after Foster displayed a gun. She argued that warrants a more lenient view and juvenile charges against Russell.

Foster has denied displaying a gun or threatening Russell. Authorities said they found no gun at the scene.

"This kid was in fear of his life," Quinn-Shelton said. "I don't think (Russell) brought the gun to school for one particular child, but for protection from whomever."

The 42-year-old said she believes rising hostilities between North Side and South Side students likely spurred the violence Oct. 20, and that she hopes outreach efforts in the school will calm tensions.

She said the Parent-Teacher-Student Association is spearheading a weekly peer-counseling and conflict resolution effort beginning next month.

"I know we as parents of the black community think it's going to be my child next," Quinn-Shelton said. "What can we do to try to prevent it from reaching that point?"

"What we can do is try to educate our kids on how they can handle (conflict) differently."

Scott Davis is a staff writer for The Saginaw News. You may reach him at 776-9665.

Unhappy seniors can switch drug plans

Friday, January 27, 2006

By Sarah Kellogg
Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON -- If Michigan seniors don't like the Medicare Part D prescription drug plan they've chosen or been assigned, they ought to think about choosing another. That's the recommendation from some state politicians and health care advocates who say seniors shouldn't be stuck in a bad plan when they have the option under federal law to switch before May 15.

"If somebody is in a plan right now and it's not serving them, then they ought to look at switching to a plan that better suits their needs or one that covers more of their drugs," U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow, a Democrat who has introduced legislation to revamp the controversial program, said Thursday.

Enrollment began on Nov. 15, and the program took effect Jan. 1.

The drug benefit, which is overseen by the federal government but run by private insurers, is designed to offset prescription expenses for eligible seniors.

But some seniors discovered that the drug plan they signed up for in November had since increased prices, which was allowed by federal law to compensate insurers for fluctuating drug prices.

Other seniors, those known as dual eligibles because their incomes are so low that they also qualify for Medicaid, found that their drugs weren't covered under their new plans, or that they had to pony up huge co-payments.

Seniors advocates say the seniors who are dual eligible may be having more problems than others because they were automatically enrolled in plans instead of being given the chance to choose.

That's why dual eligibles are allowed to switch plans as often as they want. Seniors who aren't dual eligible can only switch once before May 15, although legislation is pending in Congress to extend the enrollment period through the end of the year.

"Whether they utilize that option (to switch) or not, doesn't matter. It's important they know they have that parachute," said Mary Johnson, director of the Michigan Medicare Medicaid Assistance Project, a group charged with aiding seniors in making health care decisions.

The Bush administration admits that it is still working the kinks out of the system, many of which are due to last-minute enrollments and plan switching before Dec. 31.

While a number of Michigan seniors have had problems securing prescriptions or getting the discount, Michigan hasn't seen the problems that other states have where low-income seniors faced expensive drug bills or weren't even listed in the pharmacy system. A number of states were forced to step in and pay for prescriptions for a month to allow the federal government to work out the problems.

"The biggest thing we're asking for is (for seniors) to give the program time," said Peter Ashkenaz, a spokesman for the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

In Michigan seniors can choose among 41 plans from 18 different companies.

"What people are concerned about is whether they can be confident in the decision they've made," said Ashkenaz. "If you've been auto-enrolled into a plan, you should look and make sure it fits all your individual needs. If you're choosing a plan, look at how it fits your individual needs."

As of Jan. 14, 160,824 of Michigan's 1.5 million Medicare beneficiaries had enrolled in Medicare Part D, according to federal data. Another 190,062 were automatically assigned to a plan because they are dual eligibles. About 861,000 Michigan seniors have drug coverage through a former employer or union.

Health care advocates say seniors need to be savvy consumers as they evaluate Part D, and they shouldn't be afraid to ask for help.

"Seniors really should see how things go for them -- talk to their pharmacist, talk to their family members and even talk to their congressman," said Beverley McDonald, a spokesperson for the Michigan Consumer Health Care Coalition, a health care advocacy group. "If it doesn't work, they're free to move. No one should feel like they're trapped."

Event aims to keep kids' teeth healthy

Friday, January 27, 2006

By Brian Wheeler

bwheeler@citpat.com -- 768-4928

The Center for Family Health will examine and clean children's teeth for free Feb. 3 and 4, an annual effort to make sure local kids get basic dental care.

The third Give Kids a Smile Day will take place at the center's dental clinic, 817 W. High St. Children younger than 16 can come in on a walk-in basis. Storytellers and other volunteers will lead activities, and Ronald McDonald will be on hand.

Last year's promotion served 200 children, some of whom saw a dentist for the first time. Clinic officials urge parents to bring in children who have mouth pain or who haven't seen a dentist in the last year.

"Dental decay in Jackson County children is five times more prevalent than asthma," Dr. Jane Grover, the center's dental director, said in a statement.

"This statistic reinforces what we already know -- kids living in poverty, who are uninsured or underinsured, are not getting adequate dental care."

The dental clinic has been open since May 2001. The Center for Family Health, which runs the clinic, offers discounted medical care and last year served more than 20,000 people.

"Our mission is to open the door to health care for all, and this event is one of the many ways we try to provide access to health care for those who can't afford it," Molly Kaser, the center's executive director, said in a statement.

Give Kids a Smile Day is sponsored by the American Dental Association and Crest toothpaste. Similar events are taking place throughout the country.

Agencies offer housing aid

Friday, January 27, 2006

CHAD LIVENGOOD
THE SAGINAW NEWS

Unlike his neighbors, John V. Wazny woke up Saturday morning and turned on the TV to learn about the fire at his Saginaw Township apartment complex.

He didn't have to run through thick smoke or climb down a ladder from his third-floor apartment. The 55-year-old wasn't home when a fire broke out early that morning at Lakeside Village, 4370 Lakeside Circle near Schust. But like many of his now former neighbors, Wazny remains in the dark about where he'll live next.

"I haven't found out anything yet," he said.

Rent refund?

Wazny is staying with a friend who cannot afford to keep him very long.

But because he was not rescued from Saturday's fire, Wazny cannot stay at one of two Saginaw Township hotels where 83 Lakeside residents remain until temporary housing becomes available.

Wazny paid his \$286 January rent, and Lakeside Village also has his Section 8 low-income housing federal subsidy dollars, but the complex isn't providing him shelter this week. The founder of a fire victims advocacy organization says the complex should either give Wazny a room or refund a prorated amount of this month's rent.

"I don't think it's unreasonable at all," said Deanna M. Morzinski, president of First Hands, a Mount Pleasant-based group.

Morzinski, a Saginaw native and fire survivor who specializes in helping victims file insurance claims, says Lakeside Village likely will continue collecting Section 8 funds and get hotel bills reimbursed by their insurance company.

"They're not necessarily making money, but they're not losing money," she said.

A representative for Lakeside Village's parent company said his client did what was "morally right" by offering hotel rooms to those who did not have family or friends to stay with.

"For those who chose not to and went with family and friends, I don't know if (Lakeside is) morally or legally obligated to do anything now," said Joe S. Scorsone, a spokesman and attorney for Altman Properties of Lansing.

Hotel stays

Scorsone said Lakeside is "attempting to funnel" its Section 8 funds to the Four Points by Sheraton, 4960 Towne Centre, and Hampton Inn, 2222 Tittabawassee, where 83 fire victims are expected to remain for the next two weeks.

"However long that takes, we're prepared to take them," said Lynn Ankoviak, general manager at Four Points, which has 37 of its 152 rooms occupied by Lakeside residents.

Officials with the Department of Housing and Urban Development were expected to have a temporary housing relocation plan in place by today.

The Saginaw American Red Cross, which brought in First Hands to help, is making a regional plea for monetary donations to assist with relief efforts that could cost upwards of \$31,000.

Feeding the displaced

Several restaurants have donated meals all week to Lakeside residents.

Starting today, the Red Cross will pay \$20 per person to have Damon's restaurant in Four Points provide three meals each day to 53 fire victims utilizing the meal program. That's \$1,060 a day to feed less than a third of the residents left homeless by the fire, which began in a mechanical room.

Damon's is discounting the price, said Nina Ritter, emergency services director for the Red Cross chapter.

As most Lakeside residents living on fixed incomes scramble to pay post-fire expenses, some already have opened cases with Saginaw County's **Department of Human Services**.

"Some are eligible for assistance and some aren't based on their income and assets," said Randy R. Barst, the county's director for the state agency.

Despite not having the luxury of a hotel room, Wazny said he feels fortunate to have had rental insurance. Still, the ordeal has kept him "a nervous wreck."

"I got to be calm because I don't want to have another heart attack," Wazny said.

Chad Livengood is a staff writer for The Saginaw News. You may reach him at 776-9716.

Funding feud stalls required child care training

GENESEE COUNTY

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION
Friday, January 27, 2006

By Ron Fonger
rfonger@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6317

GENESEE COUNTY - Home child care providers such as Tracy Smith of Flint Township were ready to get the new training that Michigan started requiring Jan. 1.

But a fight over who gets paid to offer the training - everything from classes on shaken baby syndrome to business management - has wiped out already scheduled sessions here and left child care providers waiting.

"They said we have to have it. Now they can't give it to us," said Smith, owner of Priority Day Care, which she operates from her home.

"I think it's good. ... I don't care if you have to pay or something. I just want to get it done."

Smith and others already enrolled in training with 4C Child Care Unlimited recently received a letter from the group, saying it has canceled all training sessions until mid-February, when officials hope to have worked out a funding dispute with the state.

Michigan 4C Association Director Mark Sullivan said hundreds of child care workers and owners statewide are in a similar spot.

"There will be training in every community," Sullivan said. "(But) a lot of people wanted to get this out of the way."

Michigan 4C Association is a nonprofit group of regional organizations such as the Genesee County-based 4C Child Care Unlimited.

Sullivan said the state Early Childhood Investment Corp. put the contract to provide training out for bids and eventually split the \$2 million in funding, giving 60 percent to MSU Extension and 40 percent to 4C groups in Michigan.

The 4C groups appealed the decision.

For 15 years, Michigan 4C had an exclusive contract for child care training programs, but Michael Foley, chief operating officer for the ECIC, said MSU Extension's proposal rated higher in every category.

Foley said he hopes to resolve the 4C appeal in a matter of days and work out which group will provide which training.

"I would really like to get this done quickly because I would like to get the money out there," Foley said. "What I want to do is sit down and work out how this is going to work."

MIRS

January 26, 2006

Kids Advise Foster Care Improvements

A panel of older kids who either have been or are still in foster care sat before a packed room of legislators Thursday morning to present their ideas on what government can do to reform the foster care system.

Older foster kids, those nearing 18, an age when they leave the foster care system, have been meeting in groups throughout the state since 2001, when they first earned a federal grant to pay for peer groups.

The groups use each other as a support system and help one another find jobs, apply for college and find transportation. They've also been compiling ideas for what the government can do to help them succeed.

"They're advising how we can change our policy and practices to better serve the youth in the system because we are their parents," said Marianne **UDOW**, director of the Department of Human Services (DHS).

The kids made 15 suggestions including, allowing foster kids to be eligible for Medicaid until they turn 21, allowing them the option of staying in the system until they're 21, giving them free tuition to state colleges, giving them priority to free or low-cost items at state auctions, making sure they all get driver's licenses, allowing them to choose what church they go to, making sure they have a copy of their social security cards and a state photo ID by the time they're 14 and receive an allowance for their own personal use.

Many of the suggestions do not fall under the authority of the state Legislature but some do, Udow said.

This fall, Udow, Supreme Court Justice Maura **CORRIGAN** and other members of a task force will release a report on their findings and will decide which suggestions need legislative action and which can be addressed outside of the Legislature.

Tax help available for those in need

Friday, January 27, 2006

MIKE THOMPSON
THE SAGINAW NEWS

The Saginaw County Community Action Committee distributes taxpayers' money to help those in need, and United Way of Saginaw County does the same with private donors' dollars.

But in one case, the agencies promote savings instead of spending.

They combine to assist thousands of low-income individuals and household heads with tax forms, showing that breaks aren't just for corporations and the wealthy.

For the federal Earned Income Tax Credit alone, the Community Action Committee reports that clients last year saved \$494,475 in funds that otherwise would have gone to Washington, D.C.

United Way's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance pegs a similar figure at \$299,000. The project starts with a kickoff from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday at National City Bank, 2322 Tittabawassee. "More people are becoming aware of the earned income credit, especially realizing that you don't necessarily have to have children to qualify," said Shelly Hardt, who oversees the Community Action Committee effort.

Hardt and Marsha L. Cooley, United Way volunteer services coordinator, said they encourage low-income workers to avoid rushing into so-called rapid refunds without reaping their entitled tax credits.

At the same time, both agencies offer help with direct deposits so clients who face needs such as car repairs can get their hands on cash as quickly as possible.

Participants should bring W-2 statements, regular tax forms, federal 1099 earned income credit forms, Consumers Energy statements, paid property tax receipts, Social Security numbers and evidence of Department of Human Services (the former Family Independence Agency) income. Renters also should provide the landlord's name and address, with receipts for rent payments. Retirees should bring 1099R pension income statements.

Mike Thompson covers poverty issues for The Saginaw News. You may reach him at 776-9691.

Salvation Army's Red Kettle campaign a ringing success

Friday, January 27, 2006

Ann Arbor News Staff Reporter

Donations to The Salvation Army of Washtenaw County's Red Kettle campaign came in like never before during the Christmas season, but the agency wasn't as fortunate with contributions received through the mail.

Major Rick Carroll, the Salvation Army's coordinator for Washtenaw County, said the Red Kettle drive topped its \$168,000 goal, but the overall Christmas campaign fell \$50,000 short of its \$690,000 goal.

"We raised more in the kettle campaign than we ever had before and we want to thank the community for its generous support," Carroll said.

The red kettles with bell ringers standing next to them is the most popular aspect of The Salvation Army's fundraising campaign during the Christmas season. Kettles were set up near 35 businesses throughout Washtenaw County.

The donations to the kettles, however, account for less than half of the overall campaign goal, Carroll said.

"The bulk of our income comes in through the mail," he said.

The Salvation Army uses money raised during the annual Christmas campaign to provide year-round services, such as programs for seniors and youth, funding a veterans transitional housing facility and an emergency shelter for families, and providing emergency social service assistance, such as food, clothing, and help in paying utility bills.

Each year, the organization also distributes food and Christmas gifts to area families. The Salvation Army of Washtenaw County helped 622 families during Christmas 2005, up from 500 families in 2004.

Since 2001, area human services agencies have experienced local donations unexpectedly being redirected to national or international relief efforts for natural disasters or terrorism. In 2005, for instance, more than \$100,000 in donations came through The Salvation Army's Washtenaw County's office and was sent to the Gulf Coast to help with the disaster left by Hurricane Katrina. Carroll said the agency is bracing for more requests for help this year because of the economy, layoffs and high energy costs.

"Our community is very supportive and we don't want to cry problems, problems, problems when we don't have them," Carroll said. "But with heating bills going up and knowing that local needs have to be met here in Washtenaw County, we really need to recoup that \$50,000 this year."

For more information about donating to The Salvation Army of Washtenaw County, call the agency at (734) 668-8353 or visit www.comnet.org/sa.

Liz Cobbs can be reached at lcobbs@annarbornews.com or (734) 994-6810.

Most Michigan unemployment rates rose in December

1/26/2006, 5:49 p.m. ET

The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Unemployment rates rose in most of Michigan's 17 major labor market areas in December, state officials said Thursday.

Seasonally unadjusted jobless rates increased in 15 markets, according to the state Department of Labor and Economic Growth. The rates stayed the same in the other two markets — Ann Arbor and the Detroit-Warren-Livonia region.

The employment changes were typical for December, state labor analysts said. The state had 13,000 fewer seasonally unadjusted payroll jobs than in November, according to a monthly survey of employers.

About 11,000 jobs were lost in construction. Government employment dipped by 6,000 jobs, while education and health services employment decreased by 4,000 jobs.

The holiday shopping season resulted in 6,000 more jobs in retail trade. About 4,000 manufacturing jobs were added as a short-term layoff in the automotive industry ended in southeast Michigan.

The regional rates for December ranged from a low of 3.8 percent in Ann Arbor to a high of 8.8 percent in the northeast part of the Lower Peninsula.

In a positive development for the economy, last year's annual average unemployment rates declined in 15 of the state's 17 markets when compared to 2004.

The Detroit-Warren-Livonia region's annual average jobless rate rose by a tenth of a percentage point. The annual average rate was unchanged in the Ann Arbor market.

Michigan's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 6.7 percent in December. The national rate was 4.9 percent.

National and state unemployment rates are seasonally adjusted to remove seasonal influences such as production cycles, holidays, model changeovers and climate conditions. Local labor market numbers are not seasonally adjusted.

The state's major labor market areas, their seasonally unadjusted jobless rates for December and the change since November were:

- _ Ann Arbor, 3.8 percent, unchanged.
- _ Battle Creek, 5.9 percent, up from 5.8 percent.
- _ Bay City, 6.4 percent, up from 5.9 percent.
- _ Detroit-Warren-Livonia, 6.8 percent, unchanged.
- _ Flint, 7 percent, up from 6.8 percent.
- _ Grand Rapids-Wyoming, 5.5 percent, up from 5.3 percent.
- _ Holland-Grand Haven, 4.9 percent, up from 4.6 percent.
- _ Jackson, 6.1 percent, up from 5.9 percent.
- _ Kalamazoo-Portage, 5.2 percent, up from 4.9 percent.
- _ Lansing-East Lansing, 5.4 percent, up from 5.3 percent.
- _ Monroe, 5.3 percent, up from 5.2 percent.
- _ Muskegon-Norton Shores, 6.4 percent, up from 6.2 percent.

- _Niles-Benton Harbor, 6.4 percent, up from 6 percent.
- _Saginaw-Saginaw Township North, 6.9 percent, up from 6.7 percent.
- _Upper Peninsula, 6.9 percent, up from 6 percent.
- _Northeast Lower Michigan, 8.8 percent, up from 7.4 percent.
- _Northwest Lower Michigan, 6.9 percent, up from 6.1 percent.

On the Net:

Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth: <http://www.michigan.gov/cis>

Gongwer
January 26, 2006

UNEMPLOYMENT RISES IN MOST LABOR MARKETS

December saw the unemployment rate rise in most of Michigan's 17 labor markets, according to figures released Thursday by the Department of Labor and Economic Growth. But for all of 2005, the jobless rate fell in 15 of the markets compared to 2004.

From 2004 to 2005 the annual jobless rate rose by .1 percentage point in the Detroit-Warren-Livonia market, and the Ann Arbor market was unchanged from 2004, according to the figures.

The monthly increases were relatively small in southern Michigan, averaging about .5 percentage points, but in northern Michigan, heavily dependent on tourism, jobless rates rose in December from .8 percentage points to 1.4 percentage points.

Northeast Lower Michigan had the highest unemployment rate for December at 8.8 percent, up from 7.4 percent in November. Still, it was an improvement over the 10.2 percent jobless rate the area had in December 2004.

Ann Arbor had the lowest rate at 3.8 percent, unchanged from December and lower than the 4.4 percent of December 2004.

Detroit's 6.8 percent jobless rate in December was also unchanged from November, and slightly lower than the 7 percent jobless rate in December 2004.

Among counties, Washtenaw County had the lowest monthly unemployment rate at 3.8 percent, while Mackinac County had the highest at 16.6 percent. Wayne County's unemployment rate stood at 7.9 percent.

Posted: 1-27-2006

Mason Co. 2005 unemploy ment rate was 7.7 percent

By KEVIN BRACISZESKI
Ludington Daily News Staff Writer

Mason County's unemployment rate rose from 7.2 percent in November 2005 to 7.9 percent in December, and the county finished with an annual rate of 7.7 percent — its best since 4.8 percent in 2000.

The county's annual jobless rates were 4.8 percent in 2000, 9.1 percent in 2001, 11 percent in 2002, 11 percent in 2003 and 9.5 percent in 2004.

Jobless rates also rose in Manistee County, from 7.1 percent in November to 8.2 percent in December; in Oceana County, from 7.6 percent to 9.3 percent; and Lake County, from 9.5 percent to 9.6 percent.

Unemployment traditionally rises in the counties during the winter due to slowdowns in the agriculture and tourism sectors.

The 2005 annual rates for those counties were 7.9 percent for Manistee County, 8.6 percent for Oceana County and 9.8 percent for Lake County.

According to the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth, an estimated average of 15,294 Mason County residents were in the labor force in 2005, with an average of 14,121 working and 1,173 jobless.

Estimated figures for 2004 show 45 fewer residents in the work force, with 318 fewer people working and 273 more residents without jobs.

The figures also show:

- Manistee County — had 12,057 people in the labor force in 2005, with 11,108 working and 949 unemployed, compared to 2004 numbers of 11,979 in the work force, 10,935 working and 1,044 unemployed.
- Oceana County — had 13,581 people in the labor force in 2005, with 12,419 working and 1,161 unemployed, compared to 2004 numbers of 13,493 in the work force, 12,297 working and 1,196

unemployed.

- Lake County — had 4,406 people in the labor force in 2005, with 3,973 working and 433 unemployed, compared to 2004 numbers of 4,478 in the work force, 4,006 working and 472 unemployed.

kevinb@ludington
dailynews.com
845-5181, ext. 309

Friday, January 27, 2006

Jobs are key to Michigan governor's race As the campaign starts in earnest, disputed employment statistics take center stage.

Charlie Cain and Mark Hornbeck / The Detroit News

LANSING -- Has the Michigan economy really gained 99,000 jobs since Gov. Jennifer Granholm took office, as she claims?

Or is employment in the state down over the past three years and Granholm actually is governor of the state of denial, as Republicans suggest?

As often is the case when the two political parties trade blows over numbers, it depends on which set of statistics is used.

But voters' perception of the truth will be crucial in what promises to be a hot 2006 gubernatorial contest that will largely hinge on economic issues and Granholm's record on job creation.

The campaign started in earnest Thursday, with Granholm taking her vision for the state to the rank and file at the DaimlerChrysler Jefferson North Assembly Plant gate in Detroit and Grand Rapids businessman Dick DeVos, the presumptive Republican nominee, making his debut before the capital press corps in Lansing.

Both sides used their own numbers to back up their claims.

The bottom line is this: Michigan has far exceeded the national unemployment rate throughout Granholm's term, and the latest report for December had Michigan with the fourth highest jobless rate in the nation at 6.7 percent. The national rate was 4.9 percent.

Whether Granholm should be blamed for that will be open to debate over the next nine months.

The figures the governor relies on are known as household employment numbers. Besides regular wage earners, they include thousands of folks who say they are self-employed, from farmers to home-based software developers.

Sure enough, these statistics show Michigan had 4.69 million people employed in January 2003, when Granholm was inaugurated, and 4.79 million employed last month, for a net gain of 99,000 jobs.

"We use household employment because we think they show a more complete picture,:" said Liz Boyd, spokeswoman for Granholm.

But many others refer to payroll employment, or the number of working people who actually show up on company records. These figures show Michigan had 4.44 million employed in January 2003 compared to 4.36 million in December, a net loss of 80,000 jobs.

"When figuring out revenue estimates for the state, we use payroll numbers because we think they're a more accurate reflection of what's really happening in the economy," said Gary Olson, director of the nonpartisan Senate Fiscal Agency.

Republicans intend to make jobs *the* issue in the race for governor. They're following Granholm around with a giant clock indicating the state has lost a job every 10 minutes under her administration.

But that calculation is based on yet another set of numbers -- a tally of annual net job loss in the states by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. Add job losses in 2003, 2004 and 2005 together, and the sum is 160,600 jobs.

"There is somewhat of a wide range, which is pretty typical when dealing with economic projections because everyone uses a slightly different methodology," said Nate Bailey, spokesman for the state GOP.

"But the fact of the matter is, job losses in Michigan are significant, steady and ongoing." Granholm tied Michigan job losses to problems in the auto industry during her speech to the state Wednesday night and blamed the federal government for not doing its part to buoy the struggling domestic automakers.

"Wherever we live in Michigan, we know that as our auto industry struggles in this global economy, our people feel that pain more than any other state in the country," she said.

While Granholm was meeting with workers and touring the Jefferson assembly plant Thursday, DeVos was in East Lansing taping the "Off the Record" public television show and fielding questions from reporters in his first capital news conference.

The wealthy former Alticor (Amway) executive questioned the governor's employment numbers and chided her for providing few details of proposals in her State of the State address.

But DeVos declined to unveil his own economic plan for the state, saying it's early in the campaign and he has plenty of time to outline his recovery program.

You can reach Mark Hornbeck at (313) 222-2470 or mhornbeck@detnews.com.

Unemployment leaders

December 2005:

1. Mississippi, 9.9 percent
2. South Carolina, 7.0 percent
3. Alaska, 6.9 percent
- 4. MICHIGAN**, 6.7 percent
- U.S. average, 4.9 percent
49. Wyoming, 3.2 percent
50. Hawaii, 2.7 percent

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

State Employees' Perception Of Job Dropping

Fewer state employees see the importance of the state's four values — excellence, inclusion, integrity and teamwork — in their work than employees in 2003 or 2004, according to a survey shared with the governor's cabinet last month. But the person in charge of the report said she's not concerned that the quality of state work is somehow going down.

In the "Great Place to Do Great Work" update, the evidence of the four values in state work is not rising. In 2003, 96 percent of those state employees asked said "excellence" was an important value in their work. That number dropped to 85 percent in 2004 and 81 percent last year. "Inclusion" went down from 91 percent in 2003 to 75 percent to 69 percent. Similar trends were seen in "integrity" and "teamwork."

Nancy **Foltz**, Director of the Office of Great Workplace Development, said she wasn't concerned by the drop because the survey isn't "new and exciting" anymore and state officials may be seeing results that are more representative of a baseline number.

She noted that the goal is to close the gap between the values state employees say are important to them and the percent of state employees who say they see evidence of those values in their work.

"We're closing the gap, but there's still work to be done," Foltz said. "Culture change is a slow process. The key thing is that we have the right people working in state government. They are good people."

The survey showed that nearly as many state workers said progress hasn't been made in improving the workplace than said progress has been made. Exactly 5,142 workers said progress has been made while 5,100 said progress hasn't been made. The rest of those responding to the survey either didn't answer the question or didn't know.

The survey of the state of Michigan's 53,000 workers was conducted in mid-September. Employees had three to four weeks to respond. About 28 percent did so. Foltz's efforts come as a part of an initiative spearheaded by First Gentleman Dan **MULHERN**, the Office of the State Employer and the Department of Civil Service to encourage excellence and pride in state jobs.

Foltz said the encouraging numbers came from the question, "Are you proud to be a public servant?" The results ranged from an 86.6 percent yes given by idealistic new hires to the 65.5 percent given by those who have been on the job between six and 10 years. In total, 68.6 percent of state employees said they take pride in their work.

Among those responding, 52 percent said their employer has shown care to them, but only 38.5 percent said their input is ever sought or that their contributions are recognized.

Another 56 percent of employees said their workplace is at least "often" a great place to work. Another 21 percent said their state job is "occasionally" a great place to work. Fifteen percent said it's "seldom" a good job and 7 percent said it's "never" a good job.

Less than half of state employees responding (47.4 percent) said they were at least "often" times optimistic about the future. Roughly 25 percent said they were occasionally optimistic about the future. The rest said they were either seldom or never optimistic about the future.

In response to the results, Foltz said her office is going to encourage state managers to take a leadership development or coaching class. Also, managers are being asked to participate in a leadership skills assessment called "MI 360."

Your opinions

Battle Creek Enquirer

January 27, 2006

Must get welfare under control

Our governor has done it again. The Legislature passed a bill which would limit an able-bodied individual from collecting welfare benefits for more than four years in Michigan. Once this got to the governor's desk, she promptly vetoed it.

Gov. Granholm is willing to sit back and allow Michigan's welfare system to run out of control. Some of our fine state representatives stood up and said enough is enough and drafted a bill that would limit the length of time an able-bodied individual could be on welfare to four years. They considered all the people in the welfare system and only included in these changes those who were eligible for Work First.

Allowing someone four years to get situations changed for the better seems to me like a pretty long time. If someone on welfare is serious about bettering their life they should be able to accomplish it in much less than four years. The system needs to become a positive, assisting structure rather than a building to go to for a monthly handout. Going for educational classes, learning how to do up a resume and handle job interviews should be primary functions of the welfare system. Helping people to help themselves is the goal.

However, I can think of a reason that Gov. Granholm would not want to limit welfare benefits to these individuals. With the governor losing a job every 10 minutes she is in office, she realizes that with all the education there are no jobs for these individuals. Even though she has said that she sees a turnaround coming (in the next 2 1/2 to 3 years) she realizes many of these people will run out of benefits before that time. So, she would rather keep them on welfare than admit that she is not capable of pulling us out of this recession.

Chris McNall
Bronson



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING



MARIANNE UDOW
DIRECTOR

Media Advisory

Contact: Stepheni Schlinker or Maureen Sorbet (517) 373-7394
Kalamazoo Contact: Kristi Carambula, Kalamazoo RESA, (269) 488-7600

Local collaboratives in Kalamazoo, Branch and St. Joseph counties among first to receive *Great Start* Collaborative grants

*Early Childhood Investment Corporation grants focus on early childhood
development and care*

WHAT:

Ceremonial check presentations and celebration of grants to local collaboratives in Kalamazoo, Branch, and St. Joseph counties from the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC).

Local collaboratives in Kalamazoo, Branch and St. Joseph counties were among the first fourteen to be awarded grants from the ECIC, a non-profit corporation formed by Governor Granholm in her 2005 State of the State message.

The grants will be used to support local *Great Start* Collaboratives, bringing together the public, private, and non-profit sectors to develop a long-standing, sustained focus on early childhood development and care.

Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) and Regional Educational Service agencies (RESAs) will act as fiduciaries for the grants. The St. Joseph County ISD will receive a \$90,000 *Great Start* Collaborative grant; the Kalamazoo RESA will receive a \$60,000 planning grant; and the Branch ISD will receive a \$50,000 planning grant. Eleven other ISDs and RESAs around the state were also awarded funding for planning and/or implementation of *Great Start* Collaboratives.

WHEN:

Monday, January 30, 2006
Noon – 1:00 p.m.

WHERE:

Kalamazoo RESA
Wile Auditorium
1819 E. Milham Road
Kalamazoo, MI 49002

- more -

WHO:

Speakers at this event include:

Marianne Udow, Michigan Department of Human Services director and ECIC board member

Mike Foley, chief operating officer, ECIC

Dr. Craig Misner, Kalamazoo RESA Superintendent

Michael Beckwith, Branch ISD Superintendent

Dr. Jay Newman, St. Joseph County ISD Superintendent

Sen. Cameron Brown – Branch and St. Joseph counties (invited)

Sen. Tom George – Kalamazoo County (invited)

Rep. Alexander Lipsey – Kalamazoo County (invited)

Rep. Rick Shaffer – St. Joseph County